562 her husband. The "son-in-law" and the "mother-in-law" are
789 bound together by a system of interdicts; the mwanō are required
[506] to show respect to the "generation of the mothers"; the pre-eminence attached to seniority plays a role in the relations between the sexes. The woman may therefore be the object of respect and the subject of fear. [151] On the other hand, "associa-
562 tions" of women which have created a hierarchy, a teaching, a
795 ritual of initiation, and a whole body of distinguishing symbols and signs and a technique shown by a specific dance, are referred to in various documents, particularly the Mévungō (1), which is

1. Unpublished documents collected by Abbot A. Walker, a native of Lower Gabon and truly versed in local ethnology.

a Pahouin version of the Nyèmbé, a widely disseminated female sect in Gabon. This sect was observed by Du Chaillu about 1860 among the Ba-kélé who were for the most part subdued by the Fang. This observer wrote at that time that the Nyèmbé "protects the women from their male enemies, it avenges their grievances, and serves them in all circumstances according to their whims."(2)

2. Father du Chaillu, op. cit., p. 322 ff.

This points out with great subtlety, to the essentially compensatory role played by such a grouping. By participating in the "society of women," the woman remedies the marginal situation and the submission which are her share throughout her daily life. It imposes or necessitates her collaboration in important moments for the community and in domains which in principle are forbidden to her.
[535] Thus the dance of the Mévungō was used "long ago when a Pahouin tribe was preparing to wage war against another tribe or to make raids for women"; it was also used "at the time of preparation for great elephant hunts." (3) Such "associations" no longer survive

3. Abbot A. Walker, notes inédites [unpublished notes].

562 except in a sporadic and very degenerate form; we mention the
● 795 N'nup with a whole string of "queens" that has appeared in the neighboring regions of Spanish Guinea.

562 This ambiguity in the position of woman to a certain extent
578 creates an equilibrium. On the other hand, from the point of
837 view of sentimental relations, this is not true. The man who admits that marriage should be regulated primarily in terms of social considerations hopes to obtain some day a "favorite" wife and has little fear of sanctions connected with adultery. The woman, married young, remains prisoner of the system and is always threatened with severe sanctions. Apparently this results in the many disputes which were referred to by the first administrators. "Very often the woman abandons her husband and returns to her parents' village or follows a man of her choice..." (Archives of Libreville, 1909). They were also referred to by the first Fang scholars: "The Pahouin woman does not hesitate to leave with a lover; often married against her wishes she avenges [152] this state of things by a very great infidelity" (L. Mba, op. cit.). The expression used by this author is significant. What might be called the sentimental excuse permits a broader reaction responding to frustrations of another nature. We must see there the sign of tensions which are actualized at the only possible level. Let us add that the conditions created by colonization will liberate these tensions to a great extent by destroying the equilibrium obtained approximately by traditional means.

561 These tensions are not the only ones to be mended. Between
578 generations, that of the ésa and that of the mwanõ, on the same
784 segment between the eldest and the younger brothers, it appears that relationships of dependency can turn into antagonisms. Soon
[551] after his birth the young boy is "marked" by his ascendants, receiving a double name (essential in relation to other denominations) which contains the name of an ancestor of his paternal line (of a mvam) and the first term of his father's name. In addition to individual interdicts imposed by his father, the child is subject to various general interdicts which are removed by degrees as the child becomes a man. Thus, there is the interdict on the pig (1), and on

1. The pig appears as a valuable animal

177 764 Obviously this has now changed, but perhaps not so much as one would imagine: every year the courts are aware of several ordeals after a death, of mutilations of corpses which are really autopsies, of sums of money extorted which are customary compensation payments imposed on the "person responsible" for a death. And we may assume that in this connection three-quarters of the cases never reach the European courts. Funeral rites have, however, been lightened and colored by Christian influence, even when the deceased had remained to the end attached to the old beliefs: his wives or children usually call in a nkat foé (news-announcer = catechist) to say the prayers for the dead and to sing psalms or hymns. The old-fashioned cylindrical bark litter has been replaced by a European plank coffin, gradually even for women and children. The graves of the well-to-do have masonry walls and are covered with a concrete slab bearing name, date of death, and a pious text, or even with a small flower bed framed with bricks or bottle necks, with a grave stone or cross at the head. The dead man's hut is no longer destroyed, especially if made of "solid" material, nor are his personal effects broken. Often the body is washed and dressed in European clothes instead of being anointed with baa; the white shroud remains. In Christian families women take part in wakes for men and attend their burials; men attend the burials of women but rarely take part in their wakes. In [795] /104/ many villages the different /Christian/ sects have separate cemeteries.

765 177 Mourning is less rigorous and is often expressed by the European black arm band and tie worn by men. In the villages widows are still rather ill-treated (cf. above, pp. 128-129), but their sequestration has been reduced to a week, and they are allowed to wash after a month or two. Most of the prohibitions of the mourning period have fallen out of use, and the end of mourning is marked by a family gathering which has more about it of a certain kind of French provincial New Year's Eve party than of the old purificatory rites.

761 Death in the traditional concept is not so much the cessation of life as the dissociation of the personality. Enyiñ, life, comes from the verb nyiñ meaning "to survive" rather than "to be alive"; /thus life represents/ a kind of dynamism opposed to the static to, tabe = to be, exist, remain, etc.

826 774 The body, nyul or nyɔ̂l, is perishable and corruptible; it supports the other elements of the personality, above all the nsisim or nsisiñ,

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

gourd mentioned above). They put oil in it. They keep it hidden. No one else is allowed to see it. 832

When the woman cooks food for her husband, she takes the medicine, which she puts in the neck of the gourd, and puts it in her husband's food, then his heart is changed. In the evening the woman smears herself with the *abatoŋ*, which she had put in the small gourd. When she and her husband lie down, if she touches her husband, the medicine which she has eaten makes his heart change. Though he liked her before, now he loves her on account of the *biaŋ-abatioŋ*.

This is the *Biaŋ-abatioŋ*.

Biaŋ-mikul (adultery medicine).—People go and scrape medicine in the bush. If they come with the medicine, they put it in the pot. They put water in the pot. They go and catch a fowl. They cut the fowl's neck; they put the blood in the medicine with the scrapings from trees. They take medicine that is in the water, they pour it on the person's head. They also take a certain medicine called *aguvis* and rub it on the face of the sick person. They again rub it on his belly. Then they have cured the person of the *mikul*. The fowl used is not to be eaten by the sick person, others may do so. Then he is healed. 837 755 695

This is the same medicine used to detect adultery. If a person commits adultery with another man's wife, and then speaks a lie denying the affair, the person accused must drink the *biaŋ-mikul* to show the people he is innocent. If he is guilty the medicine makes him sick, and he dies or trouble comes to his people. If guilty, medicine is made to call the curse back. 837 795

This is the *Biaŋ-mikul*.

Biaŋ-adoŋa (medicine for young men, eloping medicine).—If a person goes on a journey and sees a virgin, he courts or loves her. Then the virgin accepts him. He and she go and lie down. The young man says, "Let us go in my town." If the virgin does not accept, then the young man tries to persuade her. The virgin says, "I go later." The young man says, "If you go later, give me hair for a souvenir." Then the virgin scratches over her heart. She takes the hair of her head and the blood from the scratch over her heart and gives it to the young man. He goes to his town, he says, "I'll first make medicine." He takes the hair and the blood. He takes a small piece of witch medicine. He also takes plenty of leaves. He puts the small piece of witch medicine with the leaves. The hair and the blood he also puts in the leaves. He mixes all in the leaves. He hangs them in the *bisti* basket. He says, "*Bisti*, I want to marry a woman. Take her for me." This eloping medicine hangs one day. In the morning he cuts medicine and puts it on top of a tree. He leaves the medicine on top of the tree. He goes again to the young virgin. He says, "I have come, I come to take you." The young virgin says, "I will go to-morrow." He sleeps. The young man when day breaks says, "Let us go." The young virgin says, "I will surely go." Then the young man elopes with the young virgin; he comes with her to his town. Father of the young virgin he comes vexed. The young man kills a goat for the father of the young virgin. They finish eating the goat. He (the father) sleeps one day. Next morning the young man 584 832 583